

14. (Amended) The method according to claim 13, wherein the steps of bonding and splitting the multi-component endless filament is performed on a unit with rotating screen drums.

15. (Amended) The method according to claim 12, wherein the step of impregnating the nonwoven fabric is performed with an aqueous polyurethane latex dispersion.

16. (Amended) The method according to claim 12, further comprising at least one of the steps of polishing and buffing.

REMARKS

This Preliminary Amendment amends without prejudice original claims 1-16 in the underlying PCT Application No. PCT/EP00/08547. The amendments conform the claims to U.S. Patent and Trademark Office rules, and do not add new matter to the application.

In accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(b)(3), the Substitute Specification (including the Abstract, but without the claims) contains no new matter. The amendments reflected in the Substitute Specification (including Abstract) are to conform the Specification and Abstract to U.S. Patent and Trademark Office rules or to correct informalities. As required by 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(b)(3)(iii) and § 1.125(b)(2), a Marked Up Version Of The Substitute Specification comparing the Specification of record and the Substitute Specification also accompanies this Preliminary Amendment. Approval and entry of the Substitute Specification (including Abstract) is respectfully requested.


The underlying PCT Application No. PCT/EP00/08547 includes an International Search Report, mailed December 14, 2000. The Search Report includes a list of documents that were uncovered in the underlying PCT Application. A copy of the Search Report accompanies this Preliminary Amendment.

The underlying PCT application also includes an amended International Preliminary Examination Report, dated December 6, 2001.

Applicants assert that the subject matter of the present application is new, non-obvious, and useful. Prompt consideration and allowance of the application are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,
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Dated: *April 4, 2002* By:



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Version With Markings to Show Changes Made

1. (Amended) A heel lining for the shoe industry, made up of a nonwoven fabric impregnated with a polymer, having a surface weight of 180 to 350 g/m², and tear propagation resistance values greater than [$>$] 15 N in both the lengthwise and the crosswise direction, wherein [where] the nonwoven fabric is [being] made up of melt-spun, multi-component endless filaments, aerodynamically stretched and directly laid up to form a nonwoven material, having a titer less than 2 dTex [< 2 dtex], and wherein the multi-component endless filaments, after preliminary bonding, are split and bonded up to at least 90 % to produce supermicro endless filaments having a titer less than 0.2 dTex [< 0.2 dtex].

2. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim [Claim] 1, wherein the multi-component endless filament is a bi-component endless filament of two incompatible polymers, said two incompatible polymers including [particularly] a polyester and a polyamide.

3. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim [Claim] 2, wherein the polyester portion [proportion] of the multi-component endless filament is higher than the polyamide portion [proportion].

4. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim [Claim] 3, wherein the weight ratio of the polyester portion [proportion] to the polyamide portion [proportion] in the multi-component endless filament is 1.1:1 to 3:1.

5. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 2 [one of Claims 1 to 4], wherein the multi-component endless filaments have a cross-section with an orange-like multi-segment structure, wherein [where] the segments alternately contain [containing] one of the two incompatible polymers, in each instance.

6. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 1 [one of Claims 1 to 5], wherein the nonwoven fabric made of the multi-component endless filaments is precalandered for the purpose of preliminary prebonding.

7. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 2 [one of Claims 1 to 6], wherein at least one of the incompatible polymers that forms the multi-component endless filament contains an additive, selected from a group consisting of [such as] dyeing pigments, permanently acting anti-statics and/or additives that influence the hydrophilic properties, in amounts up to 15 wt.-%.

8. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 1 [one of Claims 1 to 7], wherein the multi-component endless filament is not crimped.

9. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 1 [one of Claims 1 to 8], wherein the nonwoven fabric is impregnated with 20 to 50 wt.-% of a polymer, with reference to the starting weight of the nonwoven fabric.

10. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 1 [one of Claims 1 to 9], wherein a high-quality nubuck-like surface is formed after polishing due to ends of the [, brought about by the] microfilament [ends] being exposed at the surface.

11. (Amended) The heel lining according to claim 1 [one of Claims 1 to 10], wherein one of the two sides of the heel lining is provided with an application of hot-melt glue.

12. (Amended) A method for the production of a heel lining, the method comprising the steps of [according to one of Claims 1 to 11, characterized in that]:
spinning multi-component endless filaments [are spun] from a [the] melt; [,]
aerodynamically stretching the multi-component endless filaments; [stretched, and]
directly laying [laid] up the multi-component endless filaments to form a nonwoven material;

[a] performing a prebonding step [takes place] by one of calendering or needle-punching;

bonding [and] the nonwoven fabric [is bonded] by high-pressure fluid jets [and, at the same time,];

simultaneously splitting the nonwoven fabric [split] into supermicro-filaments having a titer < 0.2 dTex [dtex,]; and

impregnating the nonwoven fabric [subsequently impregnation] with a polymer [takes place].

13. (Amended) The method [process] according to claim [Claim] 12, wherein the steps of bonding and splitting [of] the multi-component endless filaments includes the steps of [takes place in that the pre-bonded nonwoven fabric is] alternately impacting the multi-component endless filaments [impacted] from both sides with high-pressure water jets, several times.

14. (Amended) The method [process] according to claim [Claim] 13, wherein the steps of bonding and splitting [of] the multi-component endless filament is performed [carried out] on a unit with rotating screen drums.

15. (Amended) The method [process] according to claim 12 [one of Claims 12 to 14], wherein the step of impregnating the nonwoven fabric is performed [impregnation is carried out] with an aqueous polyurethane latex dispersion.

16. (Amended) The method [process] according to claim 12 [one of Claims 12 to 15], further comprising at least one of the steps of [wherein subsequent treatment by] polishing and [or] buffing [is carried out].